revised copy

Hieroglyphica

Anonymous

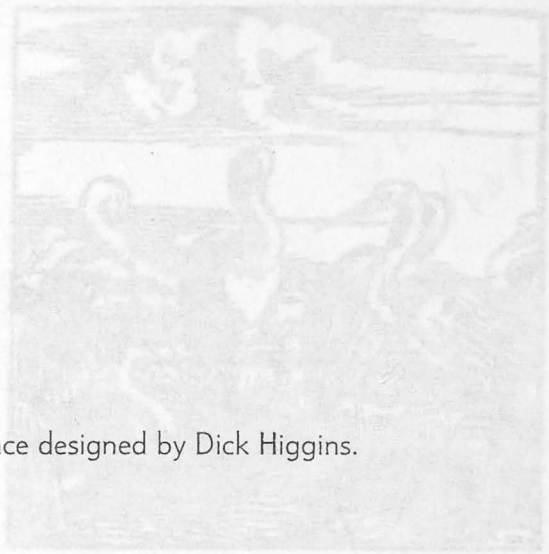
EXIT 18

add Juke photos ?

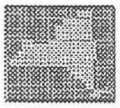
Hieroglyphica

Anonymous

EXIT 18



Hieroglyphica
copyright © 2002 Exit 18
First Printing: September, 2002
Book design by Ben Meyers
This book is set in Kenster, a typeface designed by Dick Higgins.
ISBN: 1-57027-130-5
Cover Photography by Syd Mygx



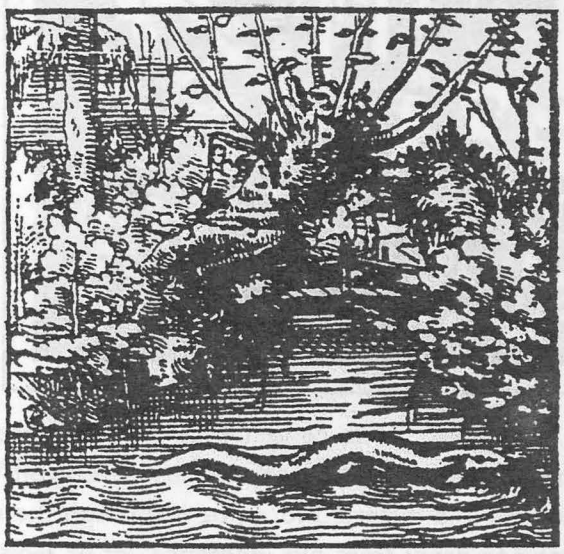
We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the New York State Council on the Arts in the production of this book

Exit 18 Pamphlet Series
Series Editor: P. Lamborn Wilson
Published and distributed by Autonomedia
PO Box 568
Williamsburgh Station
Brooklyn, NY 11211
www.autonomedia.org

"Nevertheless," I thought, "it is certain that these sciences are fraught with human error. The magic alphabet, the mysterious hieroglyph, have come down to us only in incomplete and distorted form, be it through the workings of time or of those who stand to profit from our ignorance; let us rediscover the lost letter or the vanished sign, let us recompose the dissonant scale, and we will gain strength in the world of the spirits."

—Gérard de Nerval

Aurélia, ou Le Rêve et la vie (II)



"Situated at an elevation of 200 feet above sea level, in a rugged, hilly, thinly populated, woody region, is a chain of five lakes. The first three of these, much smaller than the other two, are almost surrounded by high, overtowering rocks which descend into the lakes so steeply that in some places there is no foothold to be had at the water's edge. Between huge clefts in the rock are small patches of land once the home of the early Jukes, but now desolate except for the wild animals which live in the caves once used by the Jukes as both homes and places in which to hide stolen booty. ...

"...As the Jukes increased in number a community of criminal men, semi-industrious laborers, and licentious women developed. Children grew up in an atmosphere of poverty, crime, and licentiousness. The girls and young women of these families were very comely in appearance and loose in morals. This combination attracted the men from a nearby city, even those of so-called 'good' families. These illicit unions brought forth many an illegitimate child, named usually after the supposed father; as a result one finds among the Jukes some of the most honored names of the region. ...

"Their family name had come to be used generically as a term of reproach."

—A.H. Estabrook,
The Jukes in 1915

November letters full of meaning but no semantic content. Not sad but serious. K-Mart, country road, edge of town, up the clove: the same cows that've followed us everywhere since the Neolithic. Around here the Jukes lived in shacks: a fire in the middle of the floor, lying in a circle with their incestuous feet to the embers; a star of limbs in the dark. Drunk underemployed rural degenerates, hunters and fishers, squalid, recalcitrant, prone to death in the poorhouse: the Jukes our neighbors. We should be more like them shouldn't we, zero-workers, natural luddites, poachers, distillers, herbcrafters, refusers of knowledge. The crows stay behind. Hunting season. Every ditchweed assumes hallucinogenic clarity. We envision a monastery up here devoted to creative ignorance and endarkenment. In the Dark Ages the monasteries made points of light on a map of spilled and featureless ink. In these Lite Ages we need monasteries of darkness, holes of black light from which nothing emerges but a thin blue radiance of esotericism and some woodfire smoke. Poor wan Fall half-light as luxury or sumptuous monochrome of gloomy silks and cold wet nineteenth century megaliths. The important parts could be left out. Hermetic critique, silence of Nature, blanks between letters, cut from the text, perhaps buried in a box.

OR: THIS SEC. REMOVED & BURIED IN A BOX IN THE GROUND

Public secret: everyone knows but no one speaks. Another kind of public secret: the fact is published but no one pays attention.

A cuneiform tablet called *The Sumerian King List* states that "kingship first descended from heaven in the city of Eridu," in the south of Sumer. Mesopotamians believed Eridu the oldest city in the world, and modern archaeology confirms the myth. Eridu was founded about 5000 BC and disappeared under the sand around the time of Christ.

Eridu's god Ea or Enki (a kind of Neptune and Hermes combined) had a ziggurat where fish were sacrificed. He owned the *ME*, the fifty-one principles of Civilization. The first king, named "Staghorn," probably ruled as Enki's high priest. After some centuries came the Flood, and kingship had to descend from heaven again, this time in Uruk and Ur. Gilgamesh now appears on the list. The Flood actually occurred; Sir Leanard Wooley saw the thick layer of silt at Ur between two inhabited strata.

Bishop Ushher once calculated according to the Bible that the world was created on October 19th 4004 BC at 9 o'clock in the morning. This makes no Darwinian sense, but provides a good date for the founding of the Sumerian state, which certainly created a new world. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees; Genesis owes much to the *Enuma Elish* (Mesopotamian Creation Myth). Our only text is late Babylonian but obviously based on a lost Sumerian original. Marduk the wargod of Babylon has apparently been pasted over a series of earlier figures beginning with Enki.

Before the creation of the world as we know it a family of deities held sway. Chief among them at the time, Tiamat (a typical avatar of the universal Neolithic earth goddess) described by the text as a dragon or serpent, rules a brood of monsters and dallies with her "Consort" (high priest) Kingu, an effeminate Tammuz/Adonis prototype. The youngest gods are dissatisfied with her reign; they are "noisy," and Tiamat (the text claims) wants to destroy them because their noise disturbs her slothful slumber. In truth the young gods are simply fed up with doing all the shitwork themselves because there are no "humans" yet. The gods want Progress. They elect Marduk their king and declare war on Tiamat.

A gruesome battle ensues. Marduk triumphs. He kills Tiamut and slices her body lengthwise in two. He separates the halves with a mighty ripping heave. One half becomes sky above, the other earth below.

Then he kills Kingu and chops his body up into gobs and gobbets. The gods mix the bloody mess with mud and mold little figurines. Thus humans are created as robots of the gods. The poem ends with a triumphalist paean to Marduk, new king of heaven.

Clearly the Neolithic is over. City-god, war-god, metal-god vs. country goddess, lazy goddess, garden goddess. The creation of the world equals the creation of civilization, separation, hierarchy, masters and slaves, above and below. Ziggurat and pyramid symbolize the new shape of life.

Combining *Enuma elish* and the *King List* we get an explosive secret document about the origin of civilization not as gradual evolution toward inevitable furture, but as violent coup, conspiratorial overthrow of primordial rough-egalitarian Stone Age society by a crew of black magic cult cannibals. (Human sacrifice first appears in the archaeological record at Ur III. Similar grisly phenomena in

the first few Egyptian dynasties.)

About 3100 writing was invented at Uruk. Apparently you can witness the moment in the strata: one layer no writing, next layer writing. Of course writing has a prehistory (like the State). From ancient times a system of accounting had grown up based on little clay counters in the shapes of commodities (hides, jars of oil, bars of metal, etc.) Also glyptic seals had been invented with images used heraldically to designate the seals' owners. Counters and seals were pressed into slabs of wet clay and the records were held in Temple archives — probably records of debts owed to the Temple. (In the Neolithic the temples no doubt served as redistribution centers. In the Bronze Age they began to function as banks.)

As I picture it the invention of real writing took place within a single brilliant family of temple archivists over three or four generations, say a century. The counters were discarded and a reed stylus was used to impress signs in clay, based on the shapes of the old counters, and with further pictograms imitated from the seals. Numbering was easily compacted from rows of counters to number-signs. The real break-through came with the flash that certain pictographs could be used for their sound divorced from their meaning and recombined to "spell" other words (especially abstractions). Integrating the two systems proved cumbersome, but maybe the sly scribes considered this an advantage. Writing needed to be difficult because it was a mystery revealed by gods and a monopoly of the New Class of scribes. Aristocrats rarely learned to read and write — a matter for mere bureaucrats. But writing provided the key to state expansion by separating sound from meaning, speaker from hearer, and sight from other senses. Writing as separation both mirrors and reenforces separation as "written," as fate. Action-at-a-distance (including distance of time) constitutes the magic of the state, the nervous system of control. Writing both *is* and *represents* the new "Creation" ideology. It wipes out the oral tradition of the Stone Age and erases the collective memory of a time before hierarchy. In the text we have always been slaves.

By combining image and word in single memes or hieroglyphs the scribes of Uruk (and a few years later the pre-dynastic scribes of Egypt) created a magical system. According to a late syncretistic Greco-Egyptian myth, when Hermes-Thoth invents writing he boasts to his father Zeus that humans now never need forget anything ever again. Zeus replies, "On the contrary my son, now they'll forget *everything.*" Zeus discerned the occult purpose of the text, the forgetfulness of the oral/aural, the false memory of the text, indeed the *lost* text. He sensed a void where others saw only a plenum of information. But this void is the *telos* of writing.

Writing begins as a method of controlling debt owed to the Temple, debt as yet another form of absence. When full-blown economic texts appear a few strata later we find ourselves already immersed in a complex economic world based on debt, interest, compound interest, debt peonage as well as outright slavery, rents, leases, private and public forms of property, long-distance trade, craft monopolies, police, and even a "money-lenders' bazaar." Not money as we understand it yet, but commodity currencies (usually barley and silver), often loaned for as much as $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ per year. The Jubilee or periodic forgiveness of debts (as known in the Bible) already existed in Sumer, which would have otherwise collapsed under the load of debt.

Sooner or later the bank (i.e., the temple) would solve this problem by obtaining the monopoly on money. By lending at interest ten or more times its actual assets, the modern bank simultaneously creates debt and the money to pay debt. *Fiat*, "let it be." But even in Sumer the indebtedness of the

king (the state) to the temple (the bank) had already begun.

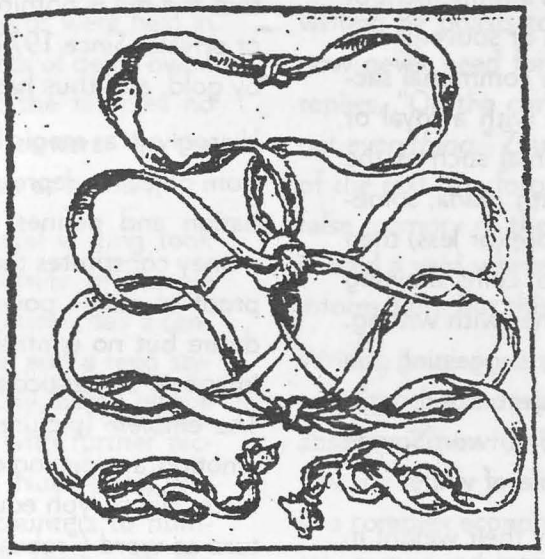
The problem with commodity currencies is that no one can have a monopoly on cows or wheat. Their materiality limits them. A cow might calve, and barley might grow, but not at rates demanded by usury. Silver doesn't grow at all.

So the next brilliant move, by King Croesus of Lydia, (Asia Minor, 7th century BC), was the invention of the coin, a refinement of money just as the Greek alphabet (also 7th cen.) was a refinement of writing. Originally a temple token or souvenir signifying one's "due portion" of the communal sacrifice, a lump of metal impressed with a royal or temple seal (often a sacrificial animal such as the bull), the coin begins its career with *mana*, something super-natural, something more (or less) than the weight of the metal. Stage two: coins showing two faces, one with image, the other with writing. You can never see both at once, suggesting the metaphysical slipperiness of the object, but together they constitute a hieroglyph, a word/image expressed in metal as a single meme of value.

Coins might "really" be worth only their weight in metal but the temple says they're worth more and the king is ready to enforce the decree. The object and its value are separated; the value floats free, the object circulates. Money works the way it works because of an absence not a presence. In fact money largely consists of absent wealth — debt— your debt to king and temple. Moreover, free of its anchor in the messy materiality of commodity currencies, money can now compound unto eternity, far beyond mere cows and jars of beer, beyond all worldly things, even unto heaven. "Money begets money," Ben Franklin gloated. But money is dead. Coins are inanimate objects. Then money must be the sexuality of the dead.

The whole of Greco-Egypto-Sumerian economics compacts itself neatly into the hieroglyphic text of the Yankee dollar bill, the most popular publication in the history of History. The owl of Athena, one of the earliest coin images, perches microscopically on the face of the bill in the upper left corner of the upper right shield (you'll need a magnifying glass), and the Pyramid of Cheops is topped with the all-seeing Eye of Horus or the panopticonical eye of ideology. The Washington family coat of arms (stars and stripes) combined with imperial eagle and fasces of arrows, etc.; a portrait of Washington as Masonic Grand Master; and even an admission that the bill is nothing but tender for debt, public or private. Since 1971 the bill is not even "backed" by gold, and thus has become pure textuality.

Hieroglyph as magic focus of desire deflects psyche from object to representation. It "enchains" imagination and defines consciousness. In this sense money constitutes the great triumph of writing, its proof of magic power. Image wields power over desire but no control. Control is added when the image is semanticized (or "alienated") by logos. The *emblem* (picture plus caption) gives desire or emotion an ideological frame and thus directs its force. Hieroglyph equals picture plus word, or picture as word ("rebus"), hence hieroglyph's power and control over both conscious and unconscious — or in other words, its magic.



"..His [twelve year old] niece accompanied him alone to go fishing; now fishing is not an employment requiring labor of either mind or body, and so we find the element conspiring to produce the crime is idleness, which left the full vitality of the man to wreak itself in the direction of licentiousness.

"...Hard, continuous labor checks the erotic passion, prevents waste of vitality, tends to decrease its intensity by disuse, etc., etc."

— R. Dugdale *"The Jukes", A Study In Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity* (1877)

"Simply standing still changes the names round about me."

— G. Bruno, *De Imaginum, signorum, et idearum compositione* (I.1.9, "Some ways of fashioning & deriving images that Chaldean writing holds in Mnemosyne's temple")

"Along with those who are from Mercury's bordering court Cupid draws near.... And there is an approach into the court of Mercury the Thief, the Cutter, the Circumciser, the Mutilator, the Fleecer, the Cutpurse, the night wandering Harpy, the sneaking Seabird, the Man of Three Letters. Also there is a way through the evil gate into the court of the sun who has, who possesses, and who gives."

—ibid., II.13

Zygastrion, little box of correspondences
telephone stained with pomegranate juice
Chinese newspaper, irridescent lustres
victorian musk, things implicated in the name
of an absent beloved surrational and ideal.
O nameless love (to misquote Bessie Smith)
& the memory of lunar datura
emerald city of the Twelfth Imam
poorest rural county in the State.
I'd like to say a word for bad intentions
a zither of dreams, nocturnal syrup
shed for thee in Tiajuana Bibles
or the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili.
Expand this sappphire saffron six o'clock
here in Hermopolis on the American Nile
stretch out your animal paw over the west
the secret of telepathy's been suppressed
because it's free (like the Aromal Telegraph).
Fairy abductors of human children yearn
for metaphors used by Persians to symbolize
the veil that is itself its own unveiling.
Our church: one god and one believer
one can fall in love by seeing pictures
a serious joke the strife of love in a dreame.
Ziggurats & pyramids on dollars
writing itself the cynocephalus
locked forever in the musoleum.
Fantasies of amorous servitude
à la Fourier, with fetishes and velvet
like Popeye with a can of spinach in him
floored, absolutely floored by the breath of day.
"Crying again & again in a spirit Church
with a humming sound," the name El Indio.

Lost in illusion & yet sanctified
he says "Nature" is never disappointing.
Naked as a steamed Lapp in a snowbank
pirate make-believe with real buried treasure
sinister cinnabar sijils from the City of Willows
absinthe (the green fairy) clouded with ice.
The vulgar world is suffocated in green
these postcards to god, new smaragdine tablets
alchemical, pallid, masturbatory, green.
I could be the pond or moonlight on your skin
and you Jack of Diamonds as pre-teen messiah.

towers of a palace, sharpcolored pennants crackling in the cold bright breeze.

In those days Bactria was also called Tocharistan because three or four centuries earlier it had been conquered by a marauding nomad tribe — the Tocharians, known to the Chinese as the "Yüeh-Chi." At that time (i.e., 2nd cen. BC) Bactria was still ruled by a decadent Greco-Iranian dynasty claiming blood descent from Alexander and Roxane. No doubt this was the richest place the Yüeh-Chi had ever sacked, and they decided not to destroy it but settle down. Everything proceeded as before — Parthians, Syrians, Bactrian Greeks, Saka nomads, money-lenders from India, Roman secret agents looking for the Silk Route to the East, Chinese secret agents looking for the Silk Route to the West, Sogdian merchants conspiring against both sides, Buddhists, shamans, Zoroastrians — everybody kept on doing what they'd been doing only now they payed taxes to the Yüeh-Chi.

Even earlier the Yüeh-Chi appear for the first time in Chinese historiography as yet another troublesome tribe on the far side of the Great Wall. They lived in westernmost China around the area known as the Jade Gate, and probably controlled the ultra-ancient jade trade from Khotan deep in the Taklamakan desert. Jade travelled in caravans long before silk or tea. Their capital was the walled city of Lou-lan in the kingdom of Shan-Shan, hard by the mysterious "wandering" great salt lake of Lop Nor between the Gobi and the Taklamakan.

Generally the Chinese payed little attention to nomad ethnography or culture but lumped all together as *hu* barbarians. One odd thing however struck the Chinese about the Tocharians: they had red or golden hair and "turquoise" blue or green eyes. They were tall and pale in color and the men had beards.

In the course of the 20th century a number of interesting "frozen tombs" were excavated in the Lop Nor district, the Turfan "depression," and around Ürümchi (capital of Chinese Turkestan or Sinkiang). The bodies were perfectly mummified by dry salty icy centuries. The corpses had blond or red hair and some had turquoises placed over the eyes. Each one was buried with a pouch of ephedra. (The frozen tombs of Pazyryk in the Altai mountains which contained full evidence for a cannabis cult, as described for the Scythians by Herodotus, are later than but related to the Tocharian burials.) The mummies' clothes, perfectly preserved after two millennia or more, were woven of wool dyed in plaid designs very similar to modern Scottish tartans. By very circuitous scholarly means (which I won't get into) we know what language the Tocharians spoke. Indo-European languages are divided into two big categories, *Centum* and *Satem* (according to the pronunciation of the word for "one hundred"). Until the decipherment of Tocharian *all* Centum languages were found in the West, and *all* Satem languages (basically Indo-Iranian) in the East. But Tocharian turns out to have been a Centum tongue more akin to Celtic than Persian. What the hell were these people doing in China? And how did they end up in northern Afghanistan?

Some scholars believe the Tocharians might've been Celtic mercenaries who made their way East (like the Gallicians of Turkey, the only Celts mentioned in the Bible) — but all the way to China? Occam's Razor suggests a simpler solution. In the early Bronze Age around Tuva and the Altai mountains lived a "europoid" people know to archaeology as the Andronovo Culture. Scholars suspect (some of them) and I feel certain that these were the original Proto-Indo-Europeans. (Nowadays the Altai is inhabited by Turks and Mongols and is still a living center of shamanism even after decades of dialectical materialism.)

Sometime in the early 2nd millennium tribal distur-

bances (maybe related to climate and pasturage) drove masses of Andronovans out of the homeland. Some moved across the Russian steppes and into the West: the Kassites who invaded Mesopotamia, the Hittites who settled in Anatolia, then the proto-Greeks, and the mysterious blond blue-eyed "Libyans" who once conquered Egypt, or the "Sea Peoples" who also invaded Egypt but failed. Others (the Satem crowd) moved southwest to Iran and India, where they became the Aryans of the *Rig Veda* and the *Avesta*. Yet others spread out over the steppes from the Altai all the way to the Black Sea and these became the Scythians and the Sakas.

The Centum/Satem division must have already evolved in remote valleys of the original Altai homeland. Most of the Centum tribes moved west but somehow in the confusion one group set out for the East, and eventually found themselves in China: the Yüeh-Chi. Like the Celts they must've been one of the last tribes to migrate, hence similarities in language, physique, and taste in plaids.

Around the 2nd century BC the Empire of the Hsiung-Nu arose in NE Central Asia and began to threaten China. These barbarians were the ancestors of the Huns, a Mongolian people who (much later) invaded Byzantium and Europe. The Hsiung-Nu were the latest mob to adopt the basic Iron Age horse-nomad tribal confederation model and they were hot for conquest. Mao Wang the great Hsiung-Nu chieftain beat the Yüeh-Chi and made a drinking cup out of the skull of their king to toast the Chinese ambassador. Some of the clans (called the "Lesser Yüeh-Chi") accepted the new regime and stayed on in Loulan and Khotan. The main body however, the Great Yüeh-Chi, decided to migrate somewhere very far away. In Kashgaria they tried to take over the grazing lands of the Wu Sun (people of mixed Indo-European and proto-Mongol origins) but were beaten again. Trudging onwards they eventually discovered the irrigated oases and supine Greco-Oriental dynasties of Bactria. Heaven!

In 138 BC Chang Ch'ien a Chinese diplomat, after ten years of unbelievable adventure and hardship, reached the camp of the Yüeh-Chi king. He suggested an alliance of China against the Hsiang-Nu. "Return and fight for the Han Emperor and you can have you old lands back again," he promised. But the king refused. They'd had enough wandering. They were in Bactria for keeps.

Chang Ch'ien however wasn't too disappointed and he certainly didn't waste his time. He discovered the "celestial blood-sweating horses" of Ferghana, of which the Chinese had heard only vague legends. He discovered peaches, apricots, grape wine. He discovered that the Sogdian merchants knew the way to Rome. It took him three more years to get back to China (captured by the Hsiung-Nu) but the Emperor was ecstatic. The Silk Route was about to be opened all the way across Eurasia. The Yüeh-Chi controlled the route through the middle, but the Yüeh-Chi were... reasonable.

One of the tribes of the Yüeh-Chi, the Kushans, now rose to power over the others and organized the horde for conquest once again. This time they hit Northern India. They conquered it and founded the Kushan Empire, which lasted till the 3rd century AD. Controlling the silk trade with Rome by land and sea (the coastal route from Indus-mouth along Persian coastline to the Red Sea) the Kushans sucked vast amounts of gold out of Rome and even struck their own gold coins — which hadn't been done in the East since the days of Alexander's successors. By now it was common for coins to show portraits of kings with gods or even *as* gods; but these coins reveal the Kushan kings in two typical barbaric modes: as bejewelled cavaliers, and as mad religious syncretists. It seems they liked to col-

lect (loot and pillage) not only rich fabulous shiny luxurious treasures, but also as many gods and goddesses as possible. Their Indian capital was Mathura (birth-place of Krishna) but their royal seats remained in Bactria, probably including Balikha (Balkh).

Now as I approach Balkh by camel late in the 2nd century AD on a winter day the Kushan Empire itself is slipping into dotage. Satraps here and there are declaring independence and the Parthians are always muscling in from the West. The great days of Vima Kadphises, Huvishka and Kanishka, are long gone. The Kushan twilight is setting in, luxuriant and corrupt, sapped by too much Buddhist quietism and Roman gold, Chinese silk and Indian spices.

In order to imagine my approach to Balkh more vividly I should dream myself back into some real historical visitor from the West like Marco Polo — but 2nd century not 14th — and not a dull Venetian merchant interested in nothing but his business itinerary. I'll pick the artist Titus, a Roman citizen from Syria. His signed self-portrait was dug out of the ruins of a lost city in the Taklamakan by Sir Aurel Stein in 1908. Titus was dapper and well-dressed, standing on tip-toe with brush extended. He'd been hired to decorate the walls of a sort of palazzo — some Buddhist themes but also very non-Buddhist scenes of feasting and pleasure. Slender noblemen, maybe Tocharians, are drinking wine. They look a lot like Sohrab and Rostam in *Shahnameh* miniatures: handsome and mustachio'd, baggy trousers and elegant riding boots, flare-waisted silk chapans worn over the shoulders with long dangling sleeves. In fact they very much resemble certain dandy friends of mine in Herat, where fashions (and faces) have remained the same till the 1970s. Bare-breasted Hindustani-looking apsarases are serving fruit and long-necked ewers of wine. Exquisite jewel-encrusted youths with golden belts holding up low-slung sarongs are serenading the revelers and playing the *chang* (Babylonian/Central Asian harp, now extinct). Flower-girls and "amorini", about twelve years old with big kohl-rimmed eyes, are dancing around the room... (Outside Sir Aurel hears a dust-storm brewing. Ice supplies are running low and the native diggers are spooked by rumors of desert ghouls and djinn. But he can't tear himself away from the dust-buried banquet...)

Balkh has always been an oasis of course, with canals and fields radiating out from the city, watercourses lined with the ubiquitous chenars, shady in the summer but now shedding their last few gold leaves over the first fresh snow. Footsore frigid and hungry, Titus passes under the Gate behind a grumbling camel. At once he's plunging into the richest bazaar he's ever experienced. Not even Antioch or Ecbatana can compare. He sees: bales of Chinese silk with dragons and phoenixes, jade from Khotan, carved ivory from the south, plaster casts of Greek statues (a sleeping Maenad, bust of Alexander), Persian brass-work, trays and delicate vases, spices ointments and drugs from India, and jewelry: turquoise from Seistan, lapis-lazuli from the pre-historic mines of Badakhshan, gold from the Altai or from Rome, fine Bactrian work and chunky barbaric armlets, Seleucid coins set in necklaces, toe-rings crusted with beryls from Serendip, bangles of lac and silver, crowns looted from ancient tumuli, ruby-eyed ankhs (still a few elephants in the north), ropes of pearls and casks of cowrie shells from the Persian Gulf and Indian Sea. Men women and children are wearing as much jewelry as they can afford and buying more with coins from everywhere in the known and unknown world from Han China (strings of cash) to Imperial Rome (debased denarii), a real headache for the tourist but a source of profitable mystification for the money-changers. Despite the cold weather fruit is still arriving in heaps and cornucopias of quinces,

apricots, plums, tablegrapes like clustered emeralds or amethysts, huge honey-flavored melons, pomegranates, figs, walnuts, pistachios, almonds, fat pine-nuts. Markets for horses, camels, hawks, sheep, cattle, goats, fowl... smells of roasting kebabs, lamb stewed with prunes and garlic, saffron rice, milky sweets. Wine, kumiss (fermented mares milk), grape syrup for teetotling Buddhists, rose sherbets.

Titus sees Chinese people for the first time, silkclad mandarins of the Han and rough camel-pullers and horse-traders. He sees darksinnned Indians from the Kushan colonies and hears Brahmins humming the Vedas. A few old conservative Bactrian Greeks still loyal to Hellenistic fashions. Wild Sakas from the north with pointed caps, their women in strange headdresses and heavy gold; even their horses are decorated and wear masks set with stags' antlers. Sogdian merchants, reputed to be wily and slick. Parthians pretending to be Persian gentlemen. Shamans from the deserts plying their trade, drumming up interest in a horse sacrifice, whirling in witch hats and tattered cloaks clanking with metal scraps and bones. Buddhist monks chanting in saffron robes and shaven heads. Shiva-worshippers from India, nearly naked in the chill, dread-locked, red-eyed, brandishing their tridents and half-skulls for begging-bowls. Zoroastrian mobeds in white, orthodox and austere.

The religious scene bewilders Titus. Shrines and temples everywhere. These people can't get enough gods. He's a pagan himself but this is ridiculous. He sees Herakles worshipped as an Iranian hero, Hecate as the ancient earthgoddess of the aborigines; he sees an old butterstained painted statue of Dionysus revered as Oesho the Bactrian Shiva with incense and paper flowers. In fact Shiva — a new deity to Titus — is everywhere and seems the favorite Kushan god (including a hermaphrodite form, Ardhanarishvara). Our artist recognizes the Egyptian child god of silence Harpocrates, and even Serapis and Isis. Mithra seems to exist not only in his Roman soldier guise but also as a local Iranian sungod. Artemis becomes Anahita, maybe Venus becomes Nana. A Greek-looking Ahura-Mazda obviously becomes Zeus, or vice versa. The River Oxus is worshipped as Marsyas playing a double flute. Buddha is smiling everywhere surrounded by Tocharian monks and noble donors. From nearby Margiana an all-white temple of the Haomavarkas or soma-drinkers has been imported. Titus decides to have a look. After worshipping the Moon (an official Kushan deity identified with soma) the pilgrim is served out of a huge vat with a goblet of pressed brew: ephedra, cannabis, and a bit of opium. Afterwards the priest shows Titus to a tiny cell and draws a light-blocking curtain.

Titus spends an enjoyable night. And how bright all colors appear next morning as if lit from within. The clean oxygenated crisp desert air and vast blue sky! and the camel bells suggesting the melancholic but intriguing notion of departure, farther east toward that bright sun.

Estabrook (*The Jukes in 1915*) commented about a dirty old Juke woman he interviewed that despite their illiteracy such people often preserved a great deal of lore and were storehouses of memory.

Memory and desire. The Jukes possessed them but the eugenicists replaced them with writing and work. Sometimes the eugenicists seem a bit nostalgic as if repressing in themselves some fleeting sexual tenderness or laziness.

I'll be blamed for romanticizing the Jukes who after all were poor ignorant syphillis-ridden bad-tempered and probably sad as everyone else or sadder. What I'm supposed to say is that if only they could've had a decent education they could be dentists or lawyers like the rest of us or the best of us.

Well I'd like to say a word in defense of bad intentions. The natural and the unnatural are both under attack from bioengineering. Human reproduction has been superseded and perverts will be tinkered with in utero. From now on only the poor will be ugly and queer.

The new genetics is the fucking old eugenics but this time the science is correct and not a load of Social Darwinian tripe. This time the science will actually work.

Where is Caliban now that we need him? slumping back into Jukishness, deciding not to buy a computer and not to launch a website, no car, no TV, no CD player, no radio, no movies. Mud has its own luxuriousness, a wealth of absences. Secret yearning impels some part of the soul downward into some trailer park, some sagging barn in bleak November rain: luxury of rural loneliness and sloth.

Sadness is at least not disappointing. Natural and Perverse In Struggle Together. Old Victorian weed-choked canals, collapsed cement mines, abandoned quarries, failed farms sold off to developers, rail tracks torn up and turned into Nature Trails. Why not an Interpretive Center devoted to the Jukes? History boosts tourism, even sad history, so authentic, so gone.

We envy the unfit. The American religion of Nature is about deliberate failure, failure as the last possible outside. Kind of a Zen of sadness — old teacup on wooden windowsill in dusty beam of pale sun — saddlebacked rickety frame house in the dark woods. Like the Shakers but with plenty of Slack and moonshine.

Bios or life is found in the bending-back of the bow (bios), the moment of tension before release, says Heraclitus. Maybe the situation calls for asceticism or even renunciation. Meanwhile, this is private property, stranger.

becomes Sec. VII w/ illo.

The Barbarians are a kind of solution
as Ibn Khaldun pointed out
whoever burned the Library at Alexandria
saved Antiquity from suffocation

Whoever learns to read hieroglyphics
could also learn to write them
projective semiotics — text as spell —
sacrcophagus of disembodied will

I heard Napoleon was initiated
inside the Pyramid of Cheops
they say Napoleon wrote
a *Book of Dreams*

Noble Drew Ali, black American prophet
circus magician, railway porter
initiated in the Pyramid, founded
Moorish Science Temple Newark 1913

The secluded child Imams
of the Hafezi-Ismaili Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo
wandered the desert alone at night
haunting pyramid and sphinx

Thoth the ibis-headed, Thoth the baboon
who understands the measurement of time
reveals the art of unraveling
or raveling image and word

Iamblichus, Horapollo, Chaldean Oracles
theurgic fragments, late classical ruins
obelisks looted from the land of crocodiles
a garden of monsters

Bruno in *De vinculis* says magical chains
are easier to forge for the masses
than for any single victim
of seduction's snare

Love magic almost never works
except in reverse on the magus
but any Madison Avenue asshole
can ensorcel millions

Hermopolis city of mummified ibises
cased in silver ibis-shaped reliquaries
frees itself from the image through the image
in an instant of jubilation

floating free in time like a flying suitcase
seen in the clouds like some dubious Jerusalem
the emerald city of Hermes Trismegistus
re-appears in Upstate New York

Palm trees pyramids and cut-out Moon
Caliph Hakim and a bowl of green jelly
Gerard de Nerval and his slave girl
Col. Lane and the dancing boys

A Moorish Orthodox extravaganza
"What Did These Great Men Have In Common?"
Why are those dervishes howling
outside the Grand Hotel?

HooDoo mail-order Teach Yourself Hieroglyphics
theory of silence, hermetic critique
Top Secret: Destroy Before Reading
widespread literacy eliminates mystique

Egyptomania, neo-pagan delirium
Theory finds itself in deep shit
You could be a painted Anglo-Catholic idol
I could be Wandering Bishop to the Unfit

You could be an entheogenic lizard
I the lunatic licking your skin
you could be the Swedenborg of the Midwest
and absolve us of textual sin

Waiting for a sign of your coming
waiting for the barque of the Sun
waiting in the airless tomb for silence
or the sound of a gun

becomes
Sec
VI
w/
illo

TRANSFER
+
re-numbe

VI → VII

VII → VI

"On one occasion he penetrated into what he calls these 'Cradles of Crime' situated amidst the rocky borders of five lakes in _____ County; where in crumbling shanties and in holes burrowed under the rocks, congregate in the winter the prostitutes, vagabonds, felons and miscreants who infest the town and high ways in the milder season. These he visited one very severe winter after a heavy fall of snow, as the most propitious moment to observe them. He drove his sleigh into their midst alone. The stout young countryman whom he hired to accompany him, left him when he learned his destination, saying: 'I think too much of my life to risk it among highwaymen and muderers. Why, sir, they'll cut your throat for the buffalo robe you have, to say nothing of your span of horses.' But always severely earnest in whatever he thought it worth his while to undertake, he proceeded alone, was civilly received, and after talking some time and making what observations he wished, partook of a meal with the outcasts and departed unmolested."

— Dugdale, *The Jukes* (5th edition, 1895, biographical note on the author, by a friend)

When the Empress Irene assumed the Regency
she decided to reverse Iconoclastic policies
of Leo and Constantine. Her son the crown prince
dabbled in Iconoclasm; she had him blinded
an interesting punishment for one who denied
the primacy of sight.

She called a Council
to attack the Iconoclastic manifesto
written by the late emperor Constantine V
called the *Horos* or "limit, boundary"
a word that might relate to Hermes
who began his career as a pile of stones
at the border of a field.

A real show trial.
Iconoclast bishops abased themselves and recanted.
A stooge called Epiphanius the Archdeacon
played Beria and condemned each paragraph.
His arguments were circular: icons were not "idols"
because the Church had redeemed mankind from idolatry
so they couldn't be idols, q.e.d. Moreover
no sane person confuses the image with the essence:

icons are only supports for contemplation.
No one argued the other side
so Epiphanius won on every point.

We're taught to consider Iconoclasts as Vandals
art-smashers, window-breakers, pissers on altars.
We believe in freedom of art — even
for ads using women and children as meat.
The *Horus* however makes some telling points:

The essence of a thing is its life and its presence;
the representation of a thing is itself dead.
Not that Matter is dead as the Gnostics falsely claim;
the world is alive but what about man's creations?
The essence of an image lies in the absence
of the object depicted. A picture of a tree
is a tree that isn't there: subtle blasphemy.
The image fails to support the imagination
but deflects it or seduces it from its object.
It's not a reminder but a forgetfulness.
The critique of the Image is the defense
of the imagination. The only possible icon of Christ
for example would not be the portrait of his face
but the Eucharist which "is" his body and blood.

For Blakeans "god" is the Imagination
so you'd think we'd want to keep it unpolluted.
You don't need Byzantine theology to understand
that between the thing and its fateful representation
desire intrudes. Every two-bit PR flack
and advertising genius knows how *vinculi*
are forged by hieroglyphic prestidigitation.
According to the *Corpus Hermeticum* the idol

can be treated by magic to absorb the essence
of the power depicted and evoked. Bruno
believed it, and Pico, and Marsilio.
It is magic? psychology? or metaphysics?
Who cares! It works! The penny for the bun.

The *Horos* makes an exception of course for the book
which it calls an "animate icon." Charming phrase.
The book allows freedom of imagination
and lets us dream our own illustrations.
Unlike a picture it unchains imagination
or so Iconoclasts say.
I however
am not convinced that writing's the body of god.
Shamans hearing of the Bible or the Koran
like to say that they too once had a Book
but the spirits were jealous and took it back
because it enabled the shamans to be as gods.
I can't guess what it means to write
against writing . Original ideology in itself
cruel instrumentality of reason.
Man of the Three Letters
Hermes the Thief, Eleggua the doorway god
language alone is both communication
and the end of communication. Writing then
exacerbates language's inherent drift
toward breakdown of presence, towards death.
All writing is hieroglyphic therefore image
therefore seduction. Write or be written.

* * *

"*Present-Day Descendants of Ada Juke*: — Most of our social problems are produced by comparatively few families; the elimination of a few defective lines would result in an enormous reduction in our public funds."

— photo caption, from M.S. Norton,
Selective Sterilization in Primer Form, 1937

Maxine Rodinson in *Islam and Capitalism* quotes an old iconoclastic monk who says that the Devil no longer needs to seduce human souls through icons since he's invented coins.

An Italian anarchist friend of mine says his old mother always used to tell him, "Son, money is the Devil's shit."

Transf to Sumerian Economics

use Juke photos from Albany?

Exit 18 UpState Monographs
(first series)

I. Overcoming Fitness	Robert Kocik
II. Select Strange & Sacred Sites: The Ziggurat Guide to Western New York	Th. Metzger
III. High in the Himalayas	Marilyn Stablein
IV. Hieroglyphica	Anonymous
V. Ayahuasca & Shamanism	Michael Taussig interviewed by Peter Lamborn Wilson

Exit 18 Editor: P. Lamborn Wilson

Distributed exclusively through Autonomedia
Autonomedia
PO Box 568
Williamsburgh Station
Brooklyn, NY 11211-0568
718-963-2603
www.autonomedia.org info@autonomedia.org

Whoever learns to read hieroglyphics
could also learn to write them
projective semiotics — text as spell —
sarcophagus of disembodied will

EXIT 18 UpState Monographs $5 ISBN: 1-57027-130-5